AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original)   A method for automating the management of a project, the method comprising the steps of:

generating at least one electronic document associated with the project;

identifying entities that comprise an approval hierarchy; and

automatically forwarding a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities in the approval hierarchy upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval hierarchy.

2. (Original)   The method as recited in claim 1, the method further comprising the steps of:

one of the entities in the approval process requesting clarification with respect to the at least one electronic document; and

automatically forwarding the at least one electronic document to one of a previous entity in the approval hierarchy and the document originator for the requested clarification.

3. (Original)   The method as recited in claim 2, the method further comprising the steps of:

opening an electronic notebook associated with the at least one electronic document;

generating the requested clarification in the electronic notebook; and

forwarding the at least one electronic document back to the entity that requested the clarification.

4. (Original)   The method as recited in claim 1, the method further comprising the steps of:

one of the entities in the approval process disapproving the at least one electronic document; and

automatically forwarding the at least one electronic document to one of a previous entity in the approval hierarchy and the document originator.

5. (Original)   The method as recited in claim 1, the method further comprising the step of:

determining if a monetary value associated with the at least one electronic document requires that at least one electronic document obtain the approval of a higher level entity in the approval hierarchy.

6. (Original)   The method as recited in claim 1, the method further comprising the step of temporarily substituting a substitute entity for one of the entities in the approval hierarchy.

7. (Original)   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of maintaining the at least one electronic document in a central storage location to which the entities in the approval hierarchy can access, review and approve the at least one electronic document.

8. (Original)   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one electronic document is a request for assistance that initiates the project.

9. (Original)   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one electronic document is a contract.

10. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one electronic document is a commitment with respect to a vendor on the project.

11. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one electronic document is a bid.

12. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one electronic document is a funding document that contains the funding for the project.

13. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one electronic document is a purchase order.

14. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one electronic document is a change order.

15. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the at least one electronic document is an invoice approval document.

16. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of attaching a digital signature to the at least one electronic document in order to indicate the approval of an entity in the approval hierarchy.

17. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the electronic document is generated by a client and wherein the approval hierarchy is a client approval hierarchy, the method further comprising the steps of:

identifying project management entities that comprise a project management approval hierarchy; and

automatically forwarding a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the project management entities in the project management approval hierarchy upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous project management entity in the project management approval hierarchy.

18. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein there are a plurality of electronic documents, the method further comprising the steps of:

organizing the plurality of electronic documents into folders; and

providing a plurality of views of the plurality of electronic documents.

19. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

establishing a user profile for each user participating in the method; and

limiting a user's access to the at least one electronic document based on a parameter in the user profile.

20. (Original)　The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of generating an electronic workflow list for a user that contains a list of electronic documents that require an action by the user.

21. (Original)　The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of automatically forwarding the notice further comprises forwarding the notice on an intranet.

22. (Original)　The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

　　generating a budget for the project; and

　　generating a funding document using the budget, wherein the at least one electronic document is the funding document.

23. (Original)　The method as recited in claim 22, wherein the step of generating the budget further comprises the steps of:

　　selecting one of a plurality of pre-existing templates for the budget, the selected template containing a plurality of selectable budget items; and

　　selecting at least one of the selectable budget items.

24. (Original) The method as recited in claim 23, wherein the step of selecting the at least one of the selectable budget items further comprises the step of using a drag and drop method.

25. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of attaching at least one other electronic file to the at least one electronic document.

26. (Original) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the at least one other electronic file is a second electronic document.

27. (Original) The method as recited in claim 26, further comprising the step of generating the second electronic document from an original paper document.

28. (Original) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the at least one other electronic file is an image file.

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29. (Original) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the at least one other electronic file is a spreadsheet file.

30. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein there are a plurality of electronic documents associated with the project , and wherein at least a subset of the plurality of electronic documents are related to financial transactions, the method further comprising:

performing a closeout operation with respect to the electronic documents, wherein the closeout determines which, if any, of the electronic documents are related to incomplete financial transaction.

31. (Original) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the project has not been completed, the step of performing the closeout further comprises performing a partial closeout, wherein the partial closeout closes out electronic documents related to completed financial transactions.

32. (Original) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the project has been completed, the step of performing the closeout further comprises performing a full closeout, wherein the full closeout closes out all electronic documents related to financial transactions.

33. (Original) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the step of performing the closeout further comprises transferring a balance of a completed financial transaction to a General Ledger account.

34. (Original) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the step of performing the closeout is not performed until the project has been 80% completed.

35. (Original) A method for automating the management of a project, the method comprising the steps of:

generating at least one electronic document associated with the project;

identifying entities that comprise an approval hierarchy;

automatically forwarding a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities in the approval hierarchy upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval hierarchy;

a first one of the entities in the approval process requesting clarification with respect to the at least one electronic document;

automatically forwarding the at least one electronic document to one of a previous entity in the approval hierarchy and the document originator for the requested clarification;

second one of the entities in the approval process disapproving the at least one electronic document; and

automatically forwarding the at least one electronic document to one of the previous entity in the approval hierarchy and the document originator.

36. (Original) A system for automating the management of a project, the system comprising:

a network;

a project manager workstation coupled to the network;

at least one client workstation coupled to the network, wherein the at least one client workstation is used to identify entities that comprise an approval hierarchy;

a database server coupled to the network, the database server containing at least one electronic document associated with the project;

a workflow server coupled to the network wherein the workflow server automatically forwards a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities in the approval hierarchy upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval hierarchy.

37. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36,

wherein one of the entities in the approval process requesting clarification with respect to the at least one electronic document; and

wherein the workflow server automatically forwards the at least one electronic document to one of a previous entity in the approval hierarchy and the document originator for the requested clarification.

38. (Original) The system as recited in claim 37, the system further comprising:

an electronic notebook associated with the at least one electronic document, wherein the requested clarification is generating in the electronic notebook, and wherein the at least one electronic document is forwarded back to the entity that requested the clarification.

39. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36,

wherein one of the entities in the approval process disapproves the at least one electronic document, and

wherein the workflow server automatically forwards the at least one electronic document to one of a previous entity in the approval hierarchy and the document originator.

40. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the workflow server determines if a monetary value associated with the at least one electronic document stored in the database server requires that at least one electronic document obtain the approval of a higher level entity in the approval hierarchy.

41. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein a substitute entity is temporarily substituted for one of the entities in the approval hierarchy.

42. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, the system further comprising:

a central storage location coupled to the database server, wherein the at least one electronic document is stored in the central storage location and wherein the entities in the approval hierarchy can access, review and approve the at least one electronic document through the database server.

43. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the at least one electronic document is a request for assistance that initiates the project.

44. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the at least one electronic document is a contract.

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45. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the at least one electronic document is a commitment with respect to a vendor on the project.

46. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the at least one electronic document is a bid.

47. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the at least one electronic document is a funding document that contains the funding for the project.

48. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the at least one electronic document is a purchase order.

49. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the at least one electronic document is a change order.

50. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the at least one electronic document is an invoice approval document.

51. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, the system further comprising:

a digital signature attached to the at least one electronic document in order to indicate the approval of an entity in the approval hierarchy.

52. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein there are a plurality of electronic documents, the system further comprising:

a plurality of folders in which the plurality of electronic documents are organized.

53. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, the system further comprising:

a user profile for each user participating in the system, wherein a user's access to the at least one electronic document is limited based on a parameter in the user profile.

54. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, the system further comprising:

an electronic workflow list maintained in the workflow server for a user, the workflow list containing a list of electronic documents that require an action by the user.

55. (Original) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the notice forwarded on the network.

56. (Original) The system as recited in claim 55, wherein the network is an intranet.

57. (Original) The system as recited in claim 55, wherein the network is the Internet.

5~~7~~8. (Currently amended)   The system as recited in claim 56, the system further comprising:

a budget for the project stored on the database server; and

a funding document stored on the database server, wherein the funding document is generated using the budget, and wherein the at least one electronic document is the funding document.

5~~8~~9. (Currently amended)   The system as recited in claim 5~~7~~8, the system further comprising:

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a plurality of pre-existing templates stored on the database server, the plurality of pre-existing templates being used for the generation of the budget, each of the plurality of pre-existing templates containing a plurality of selectable budget items.

5960. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 36, the system further comprising at least one other electronic file attached to the at least one electronic document.

601. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 5960, wherein the at least one other electronic file is a second electronic document.

612. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 601, wherein the second electronic document is generated from an original paper document.

623. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 601, wherein the at least one other electronic file is an image file.

634. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 601, wherein the at least one other electronic file is a spreadsheet file.

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645. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 1, wherein there are a plurality of electronic documents associated with the project , and wherein at least a subset of the plurality of electronic documents are related to financial transactions, the system further comprising:

a general ledger account stored on the database server, the workflow server performing a closeout operation with respect to the electronic documents, wherein the closeout operation transfers completed financial transactions to the general ledger.

656. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 36, wherein the network is a corporate intranet, the system further comprising:

a firewall coupled to the corporate intranet and coupled to an external network; and

a vendor workstation coupled to the corporate intranet through the external network and the firewall.

667. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 656 wherein the external network is the Internet.